

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 9, 2005

The Honorable Glenn A. Fine
Inspector General
United States Department of Justice
Office of the Inspector General
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Suite 4322
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Inspector General Fine:

I am writing to express my grave concern regarding indications that the Bureau of Prisons may not be adequately equipped to monitor prisoner correspondence conducted in Arabic. It is troubling that the Bureau of Prisons may not have enough translators or resources to effectively prevent the use of Arabic correspondence to threaten our national security by allowing convicted terrorists to incite further violence while in the custody of the United States government. In order to ensure that such events can be prevented in the future, I urge you to conduct an investigation regarding how many Arabic translators are currently employed by the Bureau of Prisons, what amount of the Bureau of Prisons budget is devoted to supporting Arabic translation and the monitoring of prisoner correspondence, which personnel are in charge of monitoring and translation, and how the monitoring and translation process could be enhanced.

As you may be aware, reports have surfaced stating that individuals convicted of committing terrorist acts against the United States have been allowed to spread their hateful propaganda and recruit future terrorists from within the walls of their cells. These reports indicate that Islamic extremists, each serving sentences of over 100 years for their role in the 1993 terrorist attack against the World Trade Center, were able to correspond with international terrorists and newspapers from the federal government's Administrative Maximum federal prison in Florence, Colorado. As part of this correspondence, these convicted terrorists spread their militant ideology to individuals in a Spanish terror cell containing an individual who later allegedly led a plot to bomb Spain's National Justice Building in Madrid. Spanish authorities say another correspondent used the terrorists' letters to recruit suicide bombers.

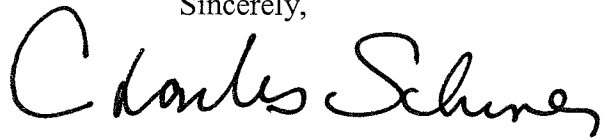
I believe that even while in federal custody, these individuals, and those in the prison population who share their beliefs, are extremely dangerous and must be the subject of the utmost vigilance. However, I am concerned that there may only be a small handful of individuals employed by the Bureau of Prisons who are capable of speaking Arabic and had not instituted a centralized system for monitoring Arabic prisoner correspondence.

I am deeply concerned that if convicted terrorists such as those in the maximum

security facility in Florence, Colorado have been able to engage in this type of dangerous correspondence a full security review is warranted to ensure that once we have captured and convicted terrorists they can no longer pose a threat to international security. Accordingly, I again urge you to undertake an investigation to determine how many Arabic translators are currently employed by the Bureau of Prisons, what amount of the Bureau of Prisons budget is devoted to supporting Arabic translation and the monitoring of prisoner correspondence, which personnel are in charge of monitoring and translation, and how the monitoring and translation process could be enhanced.

I thank you for your time and attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charles E. Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "C".

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senate